

Sen. Winfield, Rep. Stafstrom and members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Aliyah Henry and I am a UConn School of Social Work student, Chair of Students Against Mass Incarceration, and lifelong resident of East Hartford. I am here to testify before you on behalf of S.B.1085, S.B. 1089, and H.B. 7372. I am in opposition of these bills for the following reasons.

Laws criminalizing marijuana have left devastating impacts on my community as well as others throughout the state of Connecticut. Families have been torn apart and people have been struggling to find opportunities upon release due to these charges. Most of these communities share a common denominator, they are black and brown. The criminalization of marijuana is an intentional attack on communities of color. If we want to ensure that this does not continue, we must incorporate equity into marijuana policy.

It is only right that we repair the damage that was done once marijuana is legalized. Revenue generated by marijuana should be used first and foremost for expungements and community reinvestment. After being released from incarceration, people should be provided with job opportunities, housing and reparations.

Black and brown communities should be the first ones who are offered opportunities to engage in the retail sale of marijuana and benefit from marijuana taxation. Communities with the highest rates of incarceration based on marijuana charges should be given funds to build their schools, local businesses and other establishments.

No one should be given any amount of jail time for illegal distribution of marijuana. This can be solved with a fine or a restorative justice method. If our goal is to decriminalize marijuana, then mandatory minimums should not be a part of this policy nor should over-policing.

In conclusion, these bills do not fully encompass of these characteristics and must be modified to reflect this. This is a crucial step for our communities here in the state of Connecticut and we should prioritize change that is going to help them.

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